

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 139

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 18244

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PDIP IN
SUBJECT: THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ON WHY INDIA SHOULD BE OF IN-
TEREST TO THE UNITED STATES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING A LONG PRIVATE CONVERSATION ON DECEMBER
15, FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT MEHTA, IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY,
TALKED AT LENGTH ON HIS VIEWS ON WHY INDIA SHOULD BE OF CON-
SEQUENCE TO THE UNITED STATES. HE DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCY AS
INDIA'S DISCOVERING ITS OWN PARTICULAR BALANCE BETWEEN ITS ECO-
NOMIC REQUIREMENTS AND A POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH WILL ENABLE
THE COUNTRY TO MEET THOSE REQUIREMENTS. HE WAS OPTIMISTIC RE-
GARDING INDIA'S "UNIQUE SUCCESS" IN GETTING ITS ECONOMY MOVING.
HE SAID THAT INDIA FOUND ITSELF IN A POSITION IN THE NORTH-SOUTH
DIALOGUE FROM WHICH IT SOUGHT TO BUILD BRIDGES OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN THE WESTERN WORLD AND THE UNDERDEVELOPED NATIONS. AND ASKED I
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US DID NOT SEE THIS AS FITTING IN WITH ITS INTERESTS. INDIA'S
CAPACITY TO PLAY THIS ROLE MEHTA EXPLAINED REQUIRED THAT IT IMPROVE
ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND HE DESCRIBED SUCCESSFUL
EFFORTS WITH PAKISTAN AND PROBLEMS WITH BABGLADESH. HE SAID INDIA
COULD AGAIN DISCUSS ARMS LIMITATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AFTER THE
PAKISTANI ELECTIONS. MEHTA ARGUED THAT INDIA, WHOSE INTERESTS
WOULD BE SERVED BY COOPERATION WITH THE DEVELOPED WORLD SHOULD BE
OF GREATER INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES THAN CHINA WHICH CON-
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SIDERED THAT CONFRONTATION SHOULD CONTINUE AND BE AGGRAVATED.
HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT US-INDIA RELATIONS SHOULD BE BASED
UPON "MEASURES OF QUIET UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT CAN BE POSSIBLE--
NOT DRAMATIC THINGS". END SUMMARY

2. I OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT AT THIS TIME OF

TRANSITION IN WASHINGTON IT SEEMED TO ME IMPORTANT THAT WE MAINTAIN OUR COMMUNICATIONS. I POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT I COULDN'T PREDICT WHAT THE POLICIES OF THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE, BUT I TRIED TO IDENTIFY SOME OF THE EARLY ISSUES IT WOULD FACE. I ASKED MEHTA IF THERE WAS ANYTHING HE WANTED TO SAY ON INDIA'S VIEWS ABOUT THE US AND HOW INDIA MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO THE US.

3. MEHTA STARTED OUT BY TALKING ABOUT THE EMERGENCY, SAYING, AS HAD MRS. GANDHI TO CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ TWO WEEKS AGO, THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE US TO UNDERSTAND INDIA. THE QUESTION WAS WHETHER INDIA WAS FALLING FROM SOME HIGH STANDARD OF THE PAST OR DISCOVERING ITS OWN PARTICULAR BALANCE BETWEEN ITS ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH WILL PERMIT THE COUNTRY TO MEET THOSE REQUIREMENTS. IF INDIA WAS TO ACHIEVE ITS ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES, HE SAID, THERE HAD TO BE SOME ADJUSTMENT OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM; ULTIMATELY INDIA'S SUCCESS OR FAILURE WILL DEPEND ON ITS ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS. HE CLAIMED THAT INDIA'S SYSTEM IS STILL OPEN AND PLURALISTIC. THE FACT THAT INDIA IS OPEN, AND THAT THE OUTSIDE WORLD CAN SEE IT WITH ALL ITS SPOTS, SHOULD NOT BE HELD AGAINST IT. HE MADE THIS LATTER COMMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION OF THE DIFFERENCE IN US ATTITUDES TOWARD CHINA AND INDIA.

4. MEHTA THEN TURNED TO THE STATE OF INDIA'S ECONOMY AND THE UNIQUE POSITION WHICH, HE SAID, INDIA OCCUPIED BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED AND UNDER-DEVELOPED WORLD WHICH ENABLED IT TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE TWO. HE MAINTAINED THAT INDIA HAD SCORED A UNIQUE SUCCESS IN PULLING ITSELF UP BY ITS OWN BOOTSTRAPS, SAYING THAT A "TECHNOLOGICAL TAKE-OFF" WAS NOT SO REMOTE NOW. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF THE INDIAN EXPERIMENT WAS A SUCCESS
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THEN IT HAD MEANING FOR THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE. MEHTA ASKED "ARE WE OR ARE WE NOT GOING TO REJOICE IN CONFRONTATION...IS INDIA OF RELEVANCE TO THE WORLD?" INDIA HAD ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH BOTH THE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING WORLD. IT WAS A NET EXPORTER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS AND A NET IMPORTER OF COMMODITIES. ITS TECHNICIANS WERE SOUGHT BY AFRICAN COUNTRIES, NOT BY REASON OF POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC RELATIONS BUT BECAUSE OF THEIR TECHNICAL RELEVANCE. MEHTA MAINTAINED THAT INDIA WAS UNIQUE BECAUSE IT COULD "FIT IN BETTER" WITH BOTH THE UNDERDEVELOPED AND THE DEVELOPED. INDIA'S INTERESTS WERE SERVED BY COOPERATION, NOT BY CONFRONTATION; IT SOUGHT "NEW PATTERNS OF COOPERATION" WITH THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE WEST. IT HAS PROBLEMS IN ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH EASTERN EUROPE BECAUSE IT HAS REACHED A LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT AT WHICH THOSE --- CONTINUED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 18244

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COUNTRIES CAN NO LONGER MEET ITS NEEDS. IT THEREFORE SOUGHT TO BUILD BRIDGES OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE WESTERN WORLD AND THE UNDERDEVELOPED NATIONS. MEHTA ASKED RHETORICALLY, "DOES THE UNITED STATES SEE THIS AS FITTING IN WITH ITS INTERESTS? IS NOT INDIA'S CAPACITY TO BE HELPFUL IN DEVELOPING A BETTER EQUATION BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES A BASIS FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES?"

5. MEHTA THEN REPEATED A THEME WHICH WE HAVE REPORTED BEFORE. IF INDIA IS TO PLAY THIS WORLD ROLE, IT MUST WORK OUT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ITS NEAR NEIGHBORS. HE MAINTAINED THAT THINGS WERE GOING WELL WITH PAKISTAN AND THE PAKISTANIS WERE SHOWING RESTRAINT. RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH, HOWEVER, WERE STILL DIFFICULT. RESTRAINT ON BOTH SIDES WAS NECESSARY BUT BANGLADESH WAS HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF INDIA AND "SHOULD NOT USE INDIA AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR DOMESTIC POLICIES." NEVERTHELESS, MEHTA MAINTAINED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENT IN THE CLIMATE OF RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH.

6. I MENTIONED TO MEHTA THAT ONE ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD PROBABLY BE THE SUBJECT OF ARMS TRANSFERS. HE RAISED THE A-4 STORY, GIVING ME A CHANCE TO SAY THAT WHEN INDIA PICKED UP EVERY REPORT ON POSSIBLE ARMS SALES IT CREATED AN IMAGE OF INDIA IN WASHINGTON QUITE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT MEHTA HAD BEEN DESCRIBING. I ASKED SHOULD NOT INDIA PLACE THIS ISSUE IN A
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BROADER CONTEXT, ONE IN WHICH INDIA WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE RIGHT OF ITS NEIGHBORS TO OBTAIN CERTAIN ARMS AND MIGHT NOT THIS CONTEXT INCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF ARMS LIMITATIONS BETWEEN

INDIA AND PAKISTAN. MEHTA DIDN'T ANSWER MY GENERAL QUESTION BUT ON ARMS LIMITATION SAID THE QUESTION WAS ONE OF PROPOER TIMING. AFTER THE PAKISTANI ELECTION THEY COULD TALK TO BHUTTO AGAIN ON THE SUBJECT. IN THE MEANWHILE INDIA AND PAKISTAN SHOULD MAINTAIN THE SLIGHTLY IMPROVED CLIMATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM. MEHTA RATED PAKISTAN HIGH FOR ITS MODERATE POSITION ON BANGLADESH AND LOW FOR WHAT HE IMPLIED MIGHT BE ITS ROLE IN SAUDI ARABIS'S DECISION TO DENY SIKHS ADMISSION INTO THE COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY WERE CONSIDERED TO BE ANTI-ISLAM.

7. I MENTIONED THE HAZARDS PRESENTED BY INDIA'S STATEMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, STATEMENTS WHICH SOMETIMES SEEMED UNNECESSARY. MEHTA REPLIED THAT MRS. GANDHI'S JUDGMENT ON THESE QUESTIONS WAS VERY SHREWED AND RESPONSIBLE AND WE AGREED THAT THERE HAD BEEN FEW RECENT IRRITANTS OF THIS TYPE.

8. I THEN ASKED MEHTA WHETHER HE BELIEVED INDIA'S ROLE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH GLOBAL POWERS MIGHT BE OF INTEREST TO THE US. IN REPLY HE ELABORATED ON A THEME WHICH HE HAD WOVEN INTO MUCH OF HIS EARLIER ANALYSIS. WHILE INDIA HAD SENT AN AMBASSADOR TO PEKING, HOW FAR INDIA AND CHINA WOULD GO IN THEIR RELATIONS REMAINS TO BE DETERMINED. BUT, MEHTA SAID, THE BASIC QUESTION WAS WHAT WAS CHINA'S POLICY? WHAT, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS CHINA'S JUDGMENT ABOUT THE NORTH-SOUTH DEBATE? ANSWERING HIS OWN QUESTION HE SAID THERE WAS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA ON THIS. CHINA CONSIDERED THAT CONFRONTATION SHOULD CONTINUE, SHOULD BE AGGRAVATED. THE CHINESE WERE THE ONLY ONES TO COMPLIMENT THE OPEC COUNTRIES FOR THEIR GENEROSITY IN GIVING AID. MEHTA SAID THAT HE DID NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT US RELATIONS WITH CHINA BUT HE ASKED IF THAT RELATIONSHIP HAD A RECIPROCAL CONTENT. HE BELIEVED THAT THE US SHOULD SEE AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE WHEN IT CONSIDERS ITS INTERESTS IN INDIA AND CHINA.

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9. WE WOUND UP THE CONVERSATION BY RETURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND US-INDIA RELATIONS. MEHTA SAID OUR INITIAL DIALOGUE SHOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL AND SHOULD BE GIVEN NO PUBLICITY. PRIVATE AMERICANS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO GIVE MRS.

GANDHI A CLEARER EXPOSURE TO OUTSIDE VIEWS. AS FOR US-INDIA RELATIONS, MEHTA SAID THEY SHOULD BE BASED UPON "MEASURES OF QUITE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT COULD BE POSSIBLE

GLTFKGMSE DRAMATIC

THINGS."

SCHNEIDER

NOTE BY OC/T: PARA 9 AS RECEIVED. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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